

J.- L. FORAIN

M. KNOEDLER & COMPANY

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CATALOGUE  
OF AN EXHIBITION OF  
ETCHINGS AND LITHOGRAPHS  
BY  
J.- L. FORAIN

MAY 4TH TO MAY 28TH, 1926

M. KNOEDLER & COMPANY  
14 EAST FIFTY-SEVENTH STREET  
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## J.- L. FORAIN

“FORAIN’s etched line is like that of no other artist. On first making its acquaintance, one feels the shock of strangeness and surprise which is always caused by the first contact with an important innovation. It is so personal to the artist that it can never “make a school”; such attempts at imitating it as have hitherto been made are deplorable failures. The French master uses a pure, sharp line, keen and cleanly bitten, which can give the finest possible contour when it suits his purpose, but is often so complicated by twists and zigzags, crossings and tangles, that it seems almost a miracle that any recognizable form should emerge out of apparent chaos. But it does. These networks and zigzags are not so casual as the novice may think them. They are the work of a master hand, very sure of the effect it intends to produce, however unusual or even eccentric we may think the means employed. They somehow produce the effect of mass, roundness and solidity where a certain amount of shading is required, while in very lightly sketched subjects such as *Femme nue, assise sur son lit, de face* (G. 42), or *Le Repos du Modèle, 2e planche* (G. 57), the artist relies much more upon contour, and the modelling is obtained by means which appears almost miraculous, the white spaces producing their full effect by being exactly proportioned to the confining lines. It must at once be said that, as a rule, Forain’s technique can only be seen at its very best in his first states. His finest inventions are matured in his brain and spring to life complete and perfect. He rarely has the power of improving upon the first idea by subsequent refinements and alterations.

The printing of the plates is of almost uniform excellence, though it varies very much according to the special requirements of the subject. To a large extent the plate is clean-wiped; sometimes a certain amount of tone is left over the whole; but the artist scarcely ever resorts to the trick of leaving ink on the surface in certain places. The impressions,



rich in burr, of such a plate as *L'Avocat parlant au prévenu* (G. 54) are superb. The colour of the ink used is very often bistre, pale or of a decidedly reddish tint, also deep brown, and black, or blue-black. The paper used is generally Van Gelder, in large sheets, giving an ample margin to the plate; occasionally old paper has been used, and also Japan. As to the number of impressions, there is no fixed rule or even habit, except that for some time the artist made a practice of having twenty-five copies of many of his plates printed by a professional printer after taking a few *épreuves d'essai* himself. The number issued, however, since he returned to the practice of printing his own plates, is often much smaller than twenty-five."

CAMPBELL DODGSON: *The Etchings of Jean-Louis Forain*  
(*The Print-Collector's Quarterly*: Vol. VIII, No. I, pp. 2-36)

# CATALOGUE

## ETCHINGS

### 1 LA TRAITE DES BLANCHES

Guérin 26      Only State

The subject was drawn upon the plate about 1886, but Forain did not bite it in until 1909, when an edition of 25 proofs was printed upon Holland paper.

### 2 LES COULOIRS DU PALAIS

Guérin 30

Second State: In the First State two or three proofs only were printed; in the Second State "un petit nombre d'épreuves."

### 3 TÉMOINS À L'AUDIENCE (*First Plate*)

Guérin 32

Trial proof: printed in sanguine

Collection: Alfred Beurdeley

"Forain has always been, like Daumier, keenly interested in the law courts and those who frequent them, whether habitually in the exercise of their profession or on the rarer occasions when they appear there as parties to a suit or in the least enviable rôle, that of prisoner in the dock. We shall find that quite a number of his etchings bear such titles as, *L'Avocat parlant au prévenu*, *Témoins à l'audience*, *Avocat compulsant un dossier*, *La Sortie de l'audience*. He dwells in most of these on the contrast between the helplessness of the widows and orphans or of some specimen of (in one sense or another) abandoned womankind, and the keen, hawk-like bearing of the lawyer whom their misfortunes provide with his daily bread. For utter tragedy nothing in his work is comparable to the large early plate, *Fille-Mère* (G. 36).

CAMPBELL DODGSON

### 4 TÉMOINS À L'AUDIENCE (*Second Plate*)

Guérin 33

Third State: Proof No. 2 of 25 impressions

5 DANSEUSE ET MAÎTRE D'HÔTEL

Guérin 34

Only State: Soft-ground etching and aquatint

6 FILLE-MÈRE (*First Plate*)

Guérin 36

Only State: Proof No. 10 of 25 impressions

Collection: Max Biach

"For utter tragedy nothing in his work is comparable to the large early plate, *Fille-Mère* (G. 36)."

7 FILLE-MÈRE (*Second Plate*)

Guérin 37

First State

Etching and aquatint. Three proofs only were printed of this fine plate.

8 LE GROS CIGARE

Guérin 38

Only State: Soft-ground etching on zinc.

"*Le gros Cigare* is an admirable satire on the vulgar sensualist who plays a much larger part in Forain's lithographs and cartoons than in the etchings."

CAMPBELL DODGSON

9 TÉMOINS À L'AUDIENCE (*Third Plate*)

Guérin 40

Only State: Proof No. 4 of 25 impressions

Collection: Max Biach

10 BAIGNOIRE AU THÉÂTRE

Guérin 41

Second State: The plate aquatinted

Twelve impressions



11 FEMME NUE, ASSISE SUR SON LIT, DE FACE

Guérin 42

Only State: Twenty-five impressions

"Another group of subjects consists of studies of the nude model, or of single figures not taking part in any definite action. The etching of a girl sitting on her bed (G. 42), in its frank simplicity and perfectly direct and successful technical execution, is one of the finest things in Forain's *œuvre*." CAMPBELL DODGSON

12 LE RETOUR DE L'ENFANT PRODIGUE (*Third Plate*)

Guérin 46

Second State: Twenty-five impressions

"It must have come as a surprise to many of M. Forain's admirers, though not to his friends, to find him in 1909 abandoning this detached attitude towards religion, and suddenly—a very Saul among the prophets—choosing for the subjects of the most wonderful group of his etchings some of the most touching incidents in the Gospel story. . . . There is something more than art, something beyond science in these etchings; the simple test of the effect that they produce on unsophisticated people, believers in Christianity but without any definite artistic faith, suffices to prove it." CAMPBELL DODGSON

13 LE BON SAMARITAIN

Guérin 49

Third State

14 LE PRÉVENU ET L'ENFANT

Guérin 52

Third State

Collection: Max Biach

"*Le Prévenu et l'enfant* (G. 52), in which a tiny, chubby boy, lifted in his mother's arms, recognizes his father in the dock and moves his little hand and foot in greeting, affords an agreeable contrast to the rather grim contents of most of these studies of the tribunal. It is a case where, if the first state appears perfect in

its presentment of all the essentials of the scene, yet the numerous additions made in the final state are quite harmonious and complete the picture successfully." CAMPBELL DODGSON

15 L'AVOCAT PARLANT AU PRÉVENU (*Second Plate*)

Guérin 55

Second State: Proof No. 13 of twenty-five impressions

16 LE REPOS DU MODÈLE (*First Plate*)

Guérin 56

First State

17 LE CALVAIRE (*First Plate*)

Guérin 58

Second State

At a later period Forain painted a picture of the same subject, but in reverse. The painting was reproduced in *Figaro Illustré*, 1902, in the issue devoted to Forain and his work.

"Then follows another of Forain's most original and beautiful plates, *Le Calvaire* (1909), which exists in two versions (G. 58, 59), differing little from one another except that in the first the sky is full of clouds, in the second clear. Both plates are large and spacious; Forain is fond of letting in plenty of air and light and giving his people room to move about in. The subject is, I think, without a precedent in religious art. There are no crosses; the only trace of the tragedy just enacted is the ladder held erect by the group of workmen on the right, who stand with heads bent in sympathetic reverence and sorrow while the Mater Dolorosa, bowed with grief, is led away from the scene by two of her nearest and dearest. All our sympathies now are with her; the body of her Son, by whose cross she has watched so long, has been taken from her to the tomb. The men are just workmen of modern France; anything like a historical reconstruction of the scene with Oriental costumes, à la Tissot, would be as foreign to the master's way of thinking as the classical drapery of Le Sueur or Le Brun."

CAMPBELL DODGSON

18 LE CALVAIRE (*Second Plate*)

Guérin 59

First State

Collection: Max Biach

19 LA ROUTE D'EMMAÛS

Guérin 60

Second State, of three

"Then follows quite a long series of etchings dealing with the journey to Emmaüs and the supper with the two fellow-travellers, a favourite subject with Rembrandt. After the isolated *Route d'Emmaüs* (G. 60), of March, 1909, eleven plates (G. 92-102) follow in quick succession between December, 1909, and March 1910, while the two versions of the subject that in historical order come last, *Après l'Apparition* (G. 81, 82), occupy an intermediate place, dating from November, 1909."

CAMPBELL DODGSON

20 A LA TABLE DE JEU (*First Plate*)

Guérin 71

Third State

21 A LA TABLE DE JEU (*Second Plate*)

Guérin 72

First State: A few proofs only printed

22 LA MADONE ET LES ENFANTS

Guérin 73

First State: Fifteen impressions

"The order in which I like to look at these New Testament etchings is that of the sacred narrative itself, taking a little license in the placing of the first *La Madone et les Enfants* (9.73), where the Holy Child, on His mother's knee, bends forward to greet a group of three delightfully natural modern French children."

CAMPBELL DODGSON



23 PAYSAGE DES ENVIRONS DE VERSAILLES

Guérin 75

First State

Collection: Alfred Beurdeley

24 FEMME NUE, À PLAT VENTRE SUR SON LIT

Guérin 76

Third State: the plate enriched with dry-point

25 AVOCAT COMPULSANT UN DOSSIER

Guérin 77

Third State: the shadows strengthened

26 LE REPOS DU MODÈLE (*Third Plate*)

Guérin 83

First State

27 FORAIN AU BÉRET

Guérin 87

First State

"*Forain au Béret* (G. 87) is a dry-point, full of character, but somewhat tantalizing in its incompleteness." CAMPBELL DODGSON

28 LA RENCONTRE SOUS LA VOÛTE (*First Plate*)

Guérin 100

First State

Collection: Max Biach

"In several plates, varying between an upright and an oblong shape, called *La Rencontre sous la voûte*, we see the meeting of Christ with the two men whom He engages in conversation; the background of the scene is a charming little French village street, very lightly etched."

CAMPBELL DODGSON

29 ÉVANOUISSEMENT À L'AUDIENCE

Guérin 106

First State

30 LE CHRIST PORTANT SA CROIX (*First Plate*)

Guérin 107

First State

"Then come the various versions of the *Bearing of the Cross* (G. 107-110), two in which a burly soldier pushes back the inquisitive mob, and two—one of them a small and beautiful dry-point—in which the satirical motive occurs of a beggar holding out his hat to Christ as He passes with His burden."

CAMPBELL DODGSON

31 PIETÀ (*First Plate*)

Guérin 117

Second State

"He has not attempted as yet the great subject of the Crucifixion of our Lord, but he shows us in three very moving plates the *Pietà* or Lamentation beneath the Cross. In the first and second, a dry-point and an etching (G. 117, 118), the cross itself is seen; in the third there is nothing but the group, slightly varied, of four figures, including the dead Saviour. In all of them occur the quite novel and beautiful motive of the mother of our Lord bathing her Son's brow with a sponge dipped in a basin. The austere figure of the Virgin, the face, still eloquent of suffering, of the dead Christ, and the impressive unity and balance of the whole group, are worthy of one of the great Italians of the quattrocento."

CAMPBELL DODGSON

32 LA ROUTE D'EMMAÛS (*Second Plate*)

First State

33 LE DÉPART DE L'ENFANT PRODIGUE (*Oblong Plate*)

Third State

Collection: Alfred Beurdeley

34 PORTRAIT DE L'ARTISTE, REGARDANT UNE PLANCHE  
Second State

35 PORTRAIT DE L'ARTISTE, AU CHAPEAU BLANC

36 FEMME METTANT SON BAS  
Second State

37 LA MIRACULÉE À LOURDES (*First Plate*)  
First State

"*La Miraculée* is a subject that has been twice etched. In the first, and better, version the woman who has risen from her stretcher and flung down the crutch that she needs no longer, has her hands clasped upon her bosom; she stands up very rigid, and her face has the tense, hysterical look of a woman who is going through an experience which in fervent belief she attributes to a supernatural cause. There is a sense of excited movement in all the surrounding figures, and in the slight suggestion of a crowd of pilgrims following a processional banner in the background."

CAMPBELL DODGSON

38 LA MIRACULÉE À LOURDES (*Second Plate*)  
Second State

"The second etching, in which the heroine holds out her arms at her sides, is fine also, but the chief figure interests us less, though the subordinates are drawn with much more detail and are full of character and animation."

CAMPBELL DODGSON

39 LA COMMUNION DES MALADES À LOURDES  
Dry-point  
First State  
Collection: Marcel Guérin



"Another group of etchings of the utmost interest dates from 1912. It deals with a series of incidents in the life of pilgrims to Lourdes, which seem to have made a great impression on the master, who returned to this subject again in a very large and striking lithograph which served as an *affiche* for the Eucharistic Congress held at Lourdes in July, 1914, immediately before the War.

"There are at least nine, possibly more, of these Lourdes etchings, which include some of Forain's finest plates."

CAMPBELL DODGSON

#### 40 LES BRANCARDIERS, LOURDES

First State

Collection: Alfred Beurdeley

"It is eight or nine years since the Lourdes set was etched, and though a few lithographs have appeared in the meantime, of which *Le Tremplin* (two versions) is the most notable, I believe that M. Forain has not definitely published any more etchings. He has etched, but printed only in small numbers, a few of the wonderful compositions that appeared during the war in the pages, first of *L'Opinion*, then of *Le Figaro*. *La Borne (Verdun)*, in two dry-point versions, large and small, *Les Notables*, *Le Retour au Foyer*, and *Soldat qui sort de la tranchée*, were included, in a few trial proofs, in the London exhibition of 1920."

CAMPBELL DODGSON

#### 41 LES NOTABLES

Only State

#### 42 LE RETOUR AU FOYER

First State

#### 43 SOLDAT QUI SORT DE LA TRANCHÉE

First State

## LITHOGRAPHS

"IN THE period which witnessed the production of these many series of satirical cartoons, Forain was already actively engaged in one of the two branches of original graphic art in which he excels, lithography. It is not very clear when he actually began to use the process, and none of the lithographs are dated, but I believe I shall not be very wide of the mark if I say a little earlier than 1890. Down to the date (1910) of the appearance of M. Marcel Guérin's illustrated catalogue, 'J.-L. Forain Lithographe,' 89 lithographs, including five posters, had been recorded, and some few rarities, undescribed, have since been discovered. The finest existing collections, in all probability, of these much prized lithographs is that in the Dresden Kupferstichkabinett, brought together with loving care and perseverance by Max Lehrs, who discerned at a very early stage their unusual excellence and had the foresight to acquire a large collection before the prices had made such an acquisition impossible. So many of the lithographs exist only in a few trial proofs that the number of collections that are at all extensive is very limited, and these are chiefly in private ownership in Paris."

CAMPBELL DODGSON

### 44 CHEZ L' HUISSIER

Guérin 3

Only State. Proof No. 44 of fifty impressions

Collection: Max Biach

### 45 UNE SAISIE

Guérin 4

Only State. Proof No. 4 of ten impressions

Collection: Max Biach

This lithograph was reproduced in *Figaro Illustré*, in 1902, in the special issue devoted to Forain and his work.

### 46 RUE LAFFITTE

Guérin 6

Only State. Proof No. 14 of fifty impressions

This lithograph was reproduced in *Figaro Illustré*, in 1902, in the special issue devoted to Forain and his work. The picture dealer is a portrait of M. Salvador Mayer.

47 LA LOGE DE LA DANSEUSE (*Second Plate*)

Guérin 20

First State "Très rare"

Collection: Marcel Guérin

48 LA FRICTION AU GANT DE CRIN

Guérin 21

Lithotint

Collection: Max Biach

49 TROIS DESSINS SUR UNE FEUILLE

Guérin 24

Third State

Collection: Alfred Beurdeley

50 FEMME À SA TOILETTE AVEC SA FEMME DE CHAMBRE

(*First Plate: oblong*)

Guérin 30

First State: about fifteen impressions

Collection: Max Biach

51 EN GRÈCE

Guérin 60

Only State

Done for an album of prints by various artists, which M. Vollard planned to publish, but which never was issued.

52 DANSEUSE ACCOTÉE CONTRE UN PORTANT (AVEC DES  
FIGURANTS)

Guérin 65

Only State.

Proof No. 4 of six impressions (*tiré à six épreuves forain No. 4*, in the autograph of the artist)

Collection: Alfred Beurdeley



53 LE CHRIST DEPOUILLÉ DE SES VÊTEMENTS  
No. 14 of twenty-five impressions

54 LE TREMPLIN (M. CAILLAUX)  
First Plate

"It is eight or nine years since the Lourdes set was etched. . . .  
A few lithographs have appeared in the meantime, of which  
*Le Tremplin* (two versions) is the most notable."

CAMPBELL DODGSON

55 METZ: LE BOCHE EXPULSÉ  
No. 22 of forty-five impressions

56 METZ: LE BAISER AU DRAPEAU  
No. 22 of forty-five impressions

57 AVOCAT POURCHASSE  
No. 8 of forty impressions

58 CONSEIL JURIDIQUE  
No. 28 of forty impressions

59 SUSPENSION D'AUDIENCE  
No. 17 of forty impressions

60 GROUPE DE JOUEURS À LA TABLE DE JEU  
No. 22 of forty impressions

61 LE DECAVÉ  
No. 9 of forty impressions

62 SALLE DE JEU  
No. 21 of forty impressions



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